

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 26, as follows:

--The optimization may be viewed as a struggle between the strengths of the transition probabilities and those of the output probabilities. We make a physical analogy using the trellis of FIG 3b. Treat each node as a nail hammered into sand with strength proportional to its output probability and treat each link between nodes as an elastic stretching between the nails with tension proportional to the strength of the transition probability (where, e.g., the “strength” of a probability,  $p$ , is the ratio  $p/(1-p)$ ).--